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ABSTRACT

All adult biographies reviewed in "Booklist" in 1960 through 1964 and 1987 through 1989 were examined to see if the gender, racial or ethnic background, geographic setting, and occupation of the subjects changed over time. A total of 879 reviews from the 1960s and 1,103 reviews from the 1980s were examined. The analysis shows that subjects of biographies published and reviewed in the 1980s were nearly the same as those published and reviewed in the 1960s. In the 1960s, biographical subjects were 80% male, 94% white, and 52% from the United States. In the 1980s, 73% of the subjects were male, 89% were white, and 67% were from the United States. Women, minorities, and foreigners were underrepresented in the 1960s as well as the 1980s. The leading occupations in both decades were politics and writing. The subjects of reviewed biographies in "Booklist" were most likely to be white male politicians or authors living in the United States. Subjects from outside the United States were also likely to be politicians. A female subject was more likely to be the wife or mistress or mother of a famous man than to be involved in politics. African-American subjects were involved primarily in sports and music. Hispanics and Native Americans each made up less than 1% of the total in both decades. These figures will be of concern to librarians who intend to implement the objectives of the American Library Association's Minority Concerns Policy. (30 references; 10 tables) (DB)

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ADULT BIOGRAPHY REVIEWS IN BOOKLIST: HAVE THE SUBJECTS CHANGED IN TWENTY YEARS?

A Master's Research Paper submitted to the
Kent State University School of Library Science
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree Master of Library Science

by

Timothy R. Diamond

May, 1991

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ABSTRACT

All adult biographies reviewed in Booklist in 1960 through 1964 and 1987 through 1989 were examined to see if the gender, racial or ethnic background, geographic setting, and occupation of the subjects had changed over time. A total of 879 reviews from the 1960s and 1,103 reviews from the 1980s were examined. The analysis shows that subjects of biographies published and reviewed in the 1980s were nearly the same as those published and reviewed in the 1960s. In the 1960s, the subjects of biographies were 80 percent male, 94 percent white, and 52 percent were from the United States. In the 1980s, 73 percent of the subjects were male, 89 percent were white, and 67 percent were from the United States. Only 5 percent of the subjects in both time periods were from developing, non-Western countries. Women, minorities, and foreigners were underrepresented in the 1960s as well as the 1980s. The leading occupations in both decades were politics and writing. The subjects of reviewed biographies in Booklist were most likely to be white male politicians or authors living in the United States. Subjects from outside the United States were also likely to be politicians. A female subject was more likely to be the wife or mistress or mother of a famous man than to be involved in politics. African-American subjects were involved primarily in sports and music. Hispanics and Native Americans each made up less than 1 percent of the total in both decades. These figures will be of concern to librarians who intend to implement the objectives of ALA's Minority Concerns Policy.

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I. INTRODUCTION

The American Library Association states unequivocably that it promotes "the publication, production, and purchase of print and non-print materials that present positive role models of cultural minorities."[1] The Minority Concerns Policy which appears in Addressing Ethnic and Cultural Diversity: A Report of the American Library Association 1986-1989, was drafted so ALA could "more effectively address the reality of the nation's cultural diversity."[2]

The need for this new policy is evident when viewed in light of William C. Robinson's recent study, "Adult Biographies Reviewed by Library Journal in the 1960s and the 1980s." Robinson concludes that the subjects of biographies published and reviewed by Library Journal in the 1960s are virtually identical to those published and reviewed by Library Journal in the 1980s. About 76 percent of the biographies in both time periods were about males and 94 percent of the biographies were about white, non-Hispanic people. Nearly 55 percent of the subjects lived in the United States. According to this study, reviews of minority biographies are not adequately represented on the pages of Library Journal.[3]

How does Robinson's study relate to the Minority Concerns Policy? It has been shown that most libraries add biographies and other works of non-fiction to their shelves on the recommendations of a few key reviewing sources such as Library Journal. A joint study by the Association of American Publishers and ALA concluded that "book reviews influence library

selection more than any other factor."[4] Librarian Fontayne Holmes concurs: "Librarians need book reviews. Librarians use book reviews. Librarians are dependent on book reviews for book selection."[5] A nation-wide survey of public libraries revealed that "libraries still use review media as first choice in materials selection."[6] Charles Busha made the same claim in his study of adult book reviewing media:

> Most public library book selection policies are grounded in the review method: reviews of newly-published books in newspapers, magazines, professional journals, and other serials form the backbone of public library acquisition work . . . The public library must depend heavily on available book review media, whatever their strengths or weaknesses may be.[7]

Because the books that get reviewed tend to be the books librarians select, librarians clearly have reason to be interested in the quality and scope of book reviews. This is especially crucial if librarians are to implement the objectives of the Minority Concerns Policy. What better way to "present positive role models of cultural minorities" than with the selection and acquisition of biographies representing these groups? For, as Denise Wilms points out:

> In a working biography you watch the person grow, learn, achieve, or even fail; you might identify with the person, or be inspired, or you might not. But in each case there's a human connection; a life experience in all its richness has been transmitted.[8]

William Katz reports that the most heavily used review sources among libraries are: Library Journal, Booklist, The New York Times Book Review, Publishers Weekly, Kirkus, and Choice.[9] A study by Booklist itself in 1979 concluded that 90.2 percent of small and medium-sized public library and community college subscribers use Booklist as much as, or more than, any other selection tool.[10]

Purpose of the Study

This study will replicate Robinson's research using Booklist in

place of Library Journal.[11] Booklist's biography reviews will be examined to see if they adequately represent minorities as subjects or if they follow the same pattern as those in Library Journal. The questions which prompted this study are those first asked by Robinson:

> To what degree have the subjects of popular biographies written for an adult audience and likely to be in libraries changed with our changed world? Is the increasingly important social, political, and economic role of women reflected in more biographies about female subjects? Is the increasingly diverse racial and ethnic composition of the United States reflected in biographies written about people who are not white non-Hispanics? Is the increasingly important role of nations beyond the United States and Western Europe reflected in biographies about people who live in them?[12]

Limitations of the Study

The findings of the study are limited to the representation of minorities in one major reviewing source and cannot be generated to all sources of biographical reviews.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

As Robinson discovered, a review of the literature failed to reveal any published research that would answer any of the above questions. There are, however, a number of related studies which provide useful information on the subject of book reviewing. Virgil L.P. Blake's 1989 study, "The Role of Reviews and Reviewing Media in the Selection Process" examines with clarity and conciseness nearly all the published literature on book reviewing pertinent to this study. An extensive search of Library Literature and Library and Information Science Abstracts brought this investigation back, again and again, to those studies discussed by Blake. The references cited by each of these were traced and, again, no new relevant literature on book reviewing was discovered which had not already been included by Blake. (William Robinson's research, upon which this study is based, was published a year after Blake's article appeared in Collection Management.)

Blake makes the point early on that the "importance of reviews in the selection process has been emphasized in all current collection development texts."[1] He refers specifically to four standard texts written by Evans, Katz, Gardner, and jointly by Curley and Broderick.[2] Blake then summarizes twenty-two studies concerned with reviews of adult and juvenile books. He also examines the literature that focuses on the reviews and reviewing of nonprint media. Of the twenty-two studies concerned with books, four provide insight to the issues at the heart of this study:

Tisdel (1958), Serebnick (1981 and 1984), Serebnick and Cullars (1984). The rest deal with such issues as the generally positive tone of published reviews and the time-lag between a title's publication and the publication of its review.

The first of the four studies of concern here is an often-cited investigation by Kenneth Tisdel which broke new ground when it was published in 1958. Tisdel's study of libraries that rely upon staff reviews and those that depend upon published reviews revealed that "the more often a book was reviewed the more likely it was to be held by the libraries."[3] Over twenty years later, Judith Serebnick's study of the treatment of controversial titles in the reviewing media supported Tisdel's finding. The reviewing media in her study were Booklist, Choice, Kirkus, Library Journal, The New York Times Book Review, and Publishers Weekly. For all thirty medium-sized public libraries and for three sub-samples of ten public libraries in each of three states, Serebnick found:

> A strong, positive correlation between the number of reviews a book receives and the inclusion of the book in libraries. Books with a greater number of reviews were owned in significantly more libraries than were books with a lower number of reviews.[4]

Serebnick also discovered that the libraries in her study selected 84 to 88 percent of their adult nonfiction titles from the reviews in the six journals used in her investigation.[5]

In a separate study, using the same six reviewing journals, Serebnick sought to determine if these journals review books of a wide diversity of publishers or if a small core of publishers accounts for a majority of books reviewed. Serebnick developed two randomly selected samples of 360 reviews. Sixty reviews were selected from each of the six journals. The first sample consisted of reviews published in these journals between 1972 and 1974. The second sample was made up of reviews published between 1978

and 1980. Serebnick concluded that "a core of twenty to thirty mainly large trade houses was responsible for the majority of books reviewed in six key journals used extensively for book selection by librarians."[6]

In a follow-up study by Serebnick and Cullars, a sample of 214 titles published in 1980 was selected from the 1981-1982 edition of Small Press Record of Books in Print. These titles were searched in three indexes to book reviews to determine the number of reviews each received. The number of libraries which owned these titles was discovered by checking OCLC. Serebnick and Cullars concluded from this study "that the number of reviews a book receives is significantly related to the number of libraries owning that book."[7] While each of these studies is unique, all four point to a relationship between the number of reviews a book receives and the likelihood of its being owned by a library.

Unfortunately, very little research literature has been published on the characterisitcs of biographies which may or may not get reviewed in these influential journals. Virginia Witucke conducted two studies in which she analyzed juvenile biographies. Witucke concluded from these studies that "children today are not well served by biography."[8] The findings from her first study showed the subjects of most juvenile biographies lived in United States and represented a fairly homogeneous population. However, five years later, in her follow-up study, Witucke noted "a greater equilibrium . . . between living and dead subjects, among ages, fields of endeavor, and nationality."[9] As mentioned in the Introduction, Robinson found no such equilibrium in his study of adult biographies.

Most of the research published on sex-role stereotyping and racism has centered on young adult and children's literature. The Council on

Interracial Books for Children which produced the widely-distributed flyer, "Ten Quick Ways to Analyze Children's Books for Sexism and Racism," has examined the different patterns of racism and sexism in children's books. The first pattern is what the Council call "racism of omission" in which "third worlders are invisible or next-to-invisible when in fact they are <u>there</u> . . . Such unjustifiable omission tends to . . . promote the idea that racial minorities are tolerable so long as they come in small quantities (or not at all)."[10] According to the Council, the most neglected and stereotyped people in children's books are third world females. A study made by the Council of one hundred books about Puerto Ricans "revealed not only predictable racism but heavy sexism as well" and a 1976 Council study of eighty books about Asian Americans found "sexism, racism, and elitism in constant combination."[11]

School science materials were examined by Alleen Pace Nilsen for her 1987 report, "Three Decades of Sexism in School Science Materials." Nilsen observed that the absence of females in the texts and illustrations reinforce the feelings of male readers "that being male is the norm while females come away questioning where and how they fit in."[12] The trend in research, such as Nilsen's, is to study stereotyping in children's materials over time to see if any changes are taking place. Most of the studies have concentrated on textbooks, readers, career materials, picture books, and award-winning children's books.[13]

An exception is the 1983 landmark study by June Engle and Elizabeth Futas on sexism in adult encyclopedias. One of the assumptions made by Engle and Futas in the design of the study was that:

> The degree to which societal, sexist stereotyping is either reinforced or negated by commonly used reference sources not only affects children but also serves to either reinforce or negate the same in the general adult population.[14]

The researchers chose ten encyclopedias and examined the following areas: (1) inclusion/exclusion rate of women and men in separate biographical entries and index entries, (2) sex-role stereotypical language, and (3) frequencies of female and male figures in illustrations. Engle and Futas discovered that men were included more often and averaged longer entries than women. When areas of activity such as sports, performing arts, and sciences were examined, they found that fewer women than men were included as named individuals. The exceptions were in the areas of women's liberation movement, women's suffrage, and nursing. These were also the only three areas where women dominated the illustrations. The first two of these areas scored highest in neutral language use. Elsewhere, some form of sexist language was used. Engle and Futas concluded that:

> The disparate inclusion rates for women and men in the random samples clearly convey the idea that women have been of lesser value and usefulness than men in the history and growth of civilization. When a young person repeatedly fails to find biographical entries for women in an encyclopedia . . . the message is subtle, but it is there.[15]

III. METHODOLOGY

In order to collect the data to conduct the study, every issue of Booklist between January 1, 1960 and December 15, 1964 was examined. A total of 879 individual biographies written for adults appeared during this five-year period: 1960 (159 cases), 1961 (153), 1962 (187), 1963 (176), and 1964 (204). Since Booklist contained more biography reviews in the late 1980s, only three years were examined from that time period: 1987 (354 cases), 1988 (also 354), and 1989 (395) for a total of 1,103 cases. Originally, the plan was to study 1985 and 1986 as well. However, had the two additional years been included, the sample from the 1980s would have been too large in relation to that from the 1960s.

For each biography review that appeared in Booklist during those years, note was made of the following:

1. Date review appeared in Booklist
2. Title/Author
3. Name of subject if not evident from the title
4. Type of work: Biography, Autobiography, Letters, etc.
5. Gender of subject
6. Race of subject
7. Occupation of subject
8. Primary place where subject lives or lived
9. Other notes as needed

The data were tabulated on forms and examined by year and time period.

When determining a subject's occupation, the subject headings which appeared with the review were used for the 1980s biographies. In the early 1960s, however, Booklist did not print subject headings. For this period, when a subject's occupation was not known, biographical reference works were consulted to make the determination.[1]

Biographical materials consisted of biographies, autobiographies, letters, journals, diaries, interviews, and, in one instance, a collection of eulogies. Only individual biographies were examined because reviews of collective biographies, in many instances, do not name all of the subjects included. Since only a few of the subjects may be highlighted in the review of a collective biography, the data needed for the study could not be obtained from the review itself. Robinson, however, did examine both individual and collective biographies which makes his sample different from that of this study. Findings from his research will be mentioned below to make comparisons with the findings of this investigation.

IV. FINDINGS

Characteristics of the Sample

Of the reviews studied from the 1960s, 69% were reviews of biographies, 27% were autobiographies, 2% were letters, and the remaining 2% consisted of interviews, journals, diaries, and a collection of eulogies. Fewer biographies were reviewed by Booklist in the late 1980s: 55% of the materials studied were biographies; 42% were autobiographies; 1% were letters; 1% were journals and diaries; the remainder were interviews.

The characteristics of Robinson's sample were quite different. He found only a 2% decline in the number of biographies reviewed, from 55% in the 1960s to 53% in the 1980s, and a decrease in reviews of autobiographies, dropping from 41% in the 1960s to 35% in the 1980s. Collections of letters were more prominent in Robinson's investigation, making up 4% of the 1960s sample and 12% in the 1980s.

Gender of the Biographical Subjects

In the 1960s, males were the subject of 80% of the biographies (of all types) reviewed by Booklist. In the 1980s, 73% of the biographies were written about males. Table 1 summarizes the findings on gender of subjects by year. Robinsons's findings were similar: 78% of biographies from the 1960s and 74% from the 1980s were about males.

The relationship between gender and time was set at the .01 level of significance. However, it is important to note, as Robinson explained in his study:

> With such a relatively large sample size, virtually any relationship between variables will be significant or generalizable to the population as a whole. This means that significance or generalizability is not nearly as important as the strength of the relationship between the variables.[1]

When the samples are very large, as they are in this study, it is easy to establish significance for even a very slight relationship. For large samples, the most important question is, "Given that a relationship exists, how strong is it?" Significance can be obtained with a very strong relationship and very small samples, or with a very weak relationship and large samples.

Table 1.--Percentage of Male and Female Subjects, by Year

Year	Male		Female		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
1960	132	83.02	27	16.98	159	100
1961	116	75.82	37	24.18	153	100
1962	141	75.40	46	24.60	187	100
1963	138	78.40	38	21.60	176	100
1964	175	85.78	29	14.22	204	100
Total	702	79.86	177	20.14	879	100
1987	249	70.34	105	29.66	354	100
1988	261	73.73	93	26.27	354	100
1989	291	73.67	104	26.33	395	100
Total	801	72.62	302	27.38	1,103	100

In order to test the strength of the association between variables, a measure based on chi square known as Cramer's V was used. Table 2 summarizes the figures used in the computation of Cramer's V for the variable of time with the variables of gender, race, geographic setting, and occupation. The first column consists of the degrees of freedom. The figures in the second column are the results of the chi square tests

performed in order to determine V. The third column consists of the tabulated values of chi square obtained for levels of significance of .01.

Table 2.--Summary of Cramer's V Measure of Association for the Variable of Time with the Variables of Gender, Race, Geographic Setting, and Occupation

	df	X^2actual	X^{2*}	V
Gender	1	13.979	6.635	0.084
Race	1	14.837	6.635	0.086
Geographic Setting	1	0.016	6.635	0.000
Occupation	9	106.766	21.666	0.230

*p<0.01

Table 2 shows that the relationship between gender and time is significant since the observed chi square of 13.979 is higher than the tabulated value of 6.635. However, since the sample size is so large, it is misleading to rely on the chi square values alone. Therefore, Cramer's V was used to measure the strength of the association. Here, Cramer's V was .084. Interestingly, Cramer's V in Robinson's study was .08 as well, "indicating an extremely weak relationship between sex and decade."[2] While there was some increase in the number of female biographies, this study supports Robinson's conclusion that "no noteworthy trend was discovered. The subjects of biographies in the 1980s are still likely to be overwhelmingly male."[3]

Race of Biographical Subjects

White people were the subject of 94% of the biographies reviewed by Booklist in the 1960s. The percentage dropped to 89% in the 1980s. The relationship between race and decade is significant but extremely weak

with a Cramer's V of .086. Robinson had also found 94% of the biographies from the 1960s to be about whites. However, he found the same percentage in the 1980s. The Cramer's V from his study was .06, indicating the same significant but extremely weak relationship.

A percentage breakdown of the non-white subjects in the 1960s is as follows: Blacks (2.05%), Asians (1.14%), Pakistanis and Indians (1.14%), Arabs (.68%), Hispanics (.46%), Native Americans (.22%). In the 1980s, Booklist's biography reviews of non-whites were made up of: Blacks (6.44%), Asians (1.45%), Hispanics (1%), Pakistanis and Indians (.63%), Native Americans (.55%), Arabs (.36%), and Aborigines (.09%). Table 3 summarizes these findings.

Table 3.--Race/Ethnic Group of Biographical Subjects, by Decade

Year	Race/Ethnic Group	Number	Percentage
1960s	White Non-Hispanic	829	94.31
	Black	18	2.05
	Asian	10	1.14
	Pakistani/Indian	10	1.14
	Arab	6	.68
	Hispanic	4	.46
	Native American	2	.22
Total		879	100.00
1980s	White Non-Hispanic	987	89.48
	Black	71	6.44
	Asian	16	1.45
	Hispanic	11	1.00
	Pakistani/Indian	7	.63
	Native American	6	.55
	Arab	4	.36
	Aborigine	1	.09
Total		1,103	100.00

Geographic Setting of Biographical Subjects

In the 1960s, 52% of the biographies reviewed in Booklist were about subjects in the United States versus 67% in the 1980s. Robinson's study revealed the same percentage in the 1960s with a smaller increase (up 6% to 58% of the total) in the 1980s. Biographies written about those who live in English-speaking nations and reviewed in Booklist accounted for 73% of the total in the 1960s and 82% in the 1980s. Robinson found 70% of the biographies in both decades reviewed by Library Journal to be about subjects from English-speaking nations. Table 4 summarizes the findings about geographic setting.

Table 4.--Primary Setting of Biographical Subjects, by Decade

Year	Place	Number	Percentage
1960s	United States	454	51.65
	United Kingdom	181	20.59
	Western Europe	165	18.77
	Eastern Europe	32	3.64
	Asia	22	2.50
	Latin America	7	.80
	Middle East	7	.80
	Africa	6	.68
	Canada*	5	.57
Total		879	100.00
1980s	United States	745	67.55
	United Kingdom	150	13.60
	Western Europe	106	9.61
	Eastern Europe	42	3.81
	Asia	21	1.90
	Africa	18	1.63
	Middle East	12	1.09
	Canada*	6	.54
	Latin America	3	.27
Total		1,103	100.00

*Canada here includes Australia and New Zealand

Before running any tests, it was decided to group the United States, the United Kingdom, Western Europe, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand together to separate them from developing Third World countries and the nations of the Communist bloc. Australia and New Zealand were examined apart from the rest of Asia because they are Commonwealth nations and the vast majority of their citizens are of European ancestry. As seen in Table 2, the observed chi square is less than the tabulated chi square obtained for a .01 level of significance. Here, Cramer's V is zero, indicating that there is no relationship between time and geographic setting when the nations of the world are so grouped. A Cramer's V of zero was arrived at as well when the countries of Eastern Europe were included with Western Europe and the other First World countries.

Additional perspective is gained when some of the geographic areas are examined more closely. For example, 11 of the 22 subjects from Asia in the 1960s were from India (50%). During that same time period, 5 of the 7 Middle East biographies were about Israelis (71%). In the 1980s, Israelis took more Middle East slots (9 out of 12--75%) while Indians made up a smaller percentage of the Asians (5 out of 21--24%). Another trend worthy of note is that there were no white African subjects in the 1960s while twenty years later, 8 of the 18 (44%) biographies about Africans were about white Africans, five of whom were from South Africa.

Occupation of Biographical Subjects

The most significant relationship discovered between variables in this study was that between time and the occupations of the biographical subjects. Table 2 shows an observed chi square value of 106.766. This is due primarily to a large decrease in the 1980s of subjects involved in

politics and religion. The other reason for this large chi square value is the increase in the 1980s of subjects in music and acting. The relationship between time and occupation is obviously significant, but the strength of the association between the variables is still considered weak (Cramer's V of 0.23). Findings about occupation are summarized in Tables 5 and 6.

Table 5.--Occupation of Biographical Subjects, 1960-1964

Occupation	Number	Percentage
Politics	199	22.64
Writing	175	19.91
Religion	69	7.85
Military	46	5.23
Music	40	4.55
Wife*	35	3.98
Acting	34	3.87
Medicine/Psychology	34	3.87
Business	31	3.53
Art	28	3.19
Science	23	2.61
Adventurer	19	2.16
Sports	18	2.05
Law	17	1.93
Scholar	13	1.48
Airplane Pilot	8	.91
Education	8	.91
Criminal	8	.91
Other	74	8.42
Total	879	100.00

*Wife/mistress/mother, etc. of a famous male

In the 1960s, politics (23%), writing (20%), religion (8%), and the military (5%) each account for 5% or more of the biographies in the sample. Robinson found these same four occupational fields to be the most represented in the 1960s along with entertainment and adventuring.

In the 1980s, writing (22%), politics (11%), music (8%), acting (7%), sports (7%), and the military (5%) received the most attention. Robinson's study of the 1980s showed the popularity of writing, politics, and the military, but instead of music, acting, and sports, Robinson found those involved in scholarly pursuits to be next in line.

Table 6.--Occupation of Biographical Subjects, 1987-1989

Occupation	Number	Percentage
Writing	242	21.94
Politics	123	11.15
Music	93	8.43
Acting	82	7.43
Sports	75	6.80
Military	52	4.71
Art	49	4.44
Religion	35	3.17
Medicine/Psychology	32	2.90
Business	30	2.72
Patient	27	2.45
Wife*	27	2.45
Criminal	20	1.81
Science	19	1.72
TV/Film Director/Producer	19	1.72
Scholar	18	1.63
Law Enforcement	14	1.28
Aristocrat/Upper Class	14	1.28
War/Holocaust Survivor	13	1.18
Other	119	10.79
Total	1,103	100.00

*Wife/mistress/mother, etc. of a famous male

Occupation and Gender of Biographical Subjects

These findings are summarized in Tables 7 and 8. In the biographies from the 1960s, the leading "occupation" of females was that of being the wife/mistress/mother/daughter/or sister, etc. of a famous male (20%).[4] This was followed by writing (18%), being an aristocrat and/or

wealthy society woman (12%), religion (11%), politics (9%), music (7%), and acting (6%). Aristocrats, in this study, were defined as people with titles of nobility but who did not have any governing powers. Nobility with political powers were classed in the field of politics. There were no biographies in the 1960s of women involved in sports, law, the military, or scholarly pursuits.

Table 7.--Occupation and Gender of Biographical Subjects, 1960-1964

Gender	Occupation	Number	Percentage
Male	Politics	183	26.07
	Writing	143	20.37
	Religion	50	7.12
	Military	46	6.55
	Medicine/Psychology	31	4.42
	Music	28	4.00
	Business	28	4.00
	Art	27	3.84
	Acting	24	3.42
	Science	22	3.13
	Adventurer	18	2.56
	Sports	18	2.56
	Law	17	2.42
	Other	67	9.54
Total		702	100.00
Female	Wife*	35	19.77
	Writing	32	18.08
	Aristocrat	22	12.43
	Religion	19	10.73
	Politics	16	9.03
	Music	12	6.78
	Acting	10	5.65
	Patient	4	2.26
	Business	3	1.70
	Education	3	1.70
	Medicine/Psychology	3	1.70
	Other	18	10.17
Total		177	100.00

*Wife/mistress/mother, etc. of a famous male

Table 8.--Occupation and Gender of Biographical Subjects, 1987-1989

Gender	Occupation	Number	Percentage
Male	Writing	170	21.22
	Politics	102	12.73
	Music	78	9.74
	Sports	73	9.11
	Military	51	6.37
	Acting	41	5.12
	Art	40	5.00
	Business	29	3.62
	Religion	24	3.00
	Medicine/Psychology	22	2.74
	TV/Film Director/Producer	18	2.25
	Criminal	17	2.12
	Science	16	2.00
	Scholar	14	1.75
	Law Enforcement	13	1.62
	Other	93	11.61
Total		801	100.00
Female	Writing	72	23.84
	Acting	41	13.57
	Wife*	27	8.94
	Politics	21	6.95
	Music	15	4.96
	Patient	12	3.97
	Religion	11	3.64
	Medicine/Psychology	10	3.31
	Art	9	2.98
	Aristocrat	8	2.65
	War/Holocaust Survivor	8	2.65
	Airplane Pilot	4	1.32
	Crime Victim	4	1.32
	Scholar	4	1.32
	Education	3	.99
	Criminal	3	.99
	Science	3	.99
	Adventurer	2	.66
	Sports	2	.66
	Other	43	14.29
Total		302	100.00

*Wife/mistress/mother, etc. of a famous male

In the 1980s, the leading occupations of females whose biographies were reviewed in Booklist were: writing (24%), acting (14%), wife/mistress/mother, etc. of a famous male (9%), politics (7%), music (5%), being physically of mentally ill (4%), and religion (4%). Of interest here is the decline in the number of aristocrats (3% in the 1980s) and those in religion while medical and psychiatric patients (2% in the 1960s) moved in into the top five "occupations" for females in the 1980s. The occupational category of "Patient" is not to be confused with "Medicine/Psychology" which was used for professionals such as medical doctors, nurses, physical therapists, psychologists, and psychiatrists.

The four areas where women were not represented at all in the 1960s: law, sports, the military, and scholarly life, women made few advances. In the 1980s, there were still no biographies of women in law, only 1% in scholarly work, and less than 1% between the two in sports and the military.

The biographies of males follow the same pattern, for the most part, as the overall population described under the previous subheading and summarized in Tables 5 and 6. Since biographies of males made up 80% of the total in the 1960s and 73% of the total in the 1980s, it is not surprising to find this correlation. The differences which do exist are slight and can be seen in Tables 7 and 8.

Occupation and Race or Ethnic Group of Biographical Subjects

In the 1960s, only 14 biographies of African-Americans were reviewed in Booklist but a variety of occupations were represented. Sports placed first, but no one occupational category dominated the decade. However, in the 1980s, sports and music accounted for 52% (27% each) of the categories represented, followed by writing, politics, acting, business, and the

military. These findings are summarized in Table 9.

Table 9.--Occupation of African-American Biographical Subjects, by Decade

Year	Occupation	Number	Percentage
1960s	Sports	3	21.43
	Education	2	14.29
	Music	2	14.29
	Politics	2	14.29
	Comedy	1	7.14
	Exploring	1	7.14
	Merchant Marine	1	7.14
	Religion	1	7.14
	Maid	1	7.14
Total		14	100.00
1980s	Sports	17	27.42
	Music	17	27.42
	Writing	6	9.67
	Politics	5	8.06
	Acting	2	3.23
	Business	2	3.23
	Military	2	3.23
	Other	11	17.74
Total		62	100.00

The primary occupation among other races and ethnic groups in the 1960s was clearly politics: Non-U.S. blacks (3 out of a total of 4--75%), Arabs (3 out of 4--75%), Indians and Pakistanis (7 out of 10--70%), Asians (6 out of 9--66%), Hispanics (2 out of 4--50%), Native Americans (2 out of 4--50%). When subjects who are neither white nor African-American are viewed as a whole, those involved in politics make up 64 percent of the total. The military, religion, art, and writing tie for second, each with 5 percent of the total.

In the 1980s, politics continued to dominate the biographies though to a lesser extent than it did in the 1960s: Arabs (3 out of a total of 4--

75%), Indians and Pakistanis (3 out of 7--43%), Asians (4 out of 16--25%), Native Americans (4 out of 6--66%), non-U.S. blacks (4 out of 9--44%), and Hispanics (1 out of 11--9%).

Writing and religion follow politics, each with 13 percent of the total. The occupational category of wife places third. (In this case, all three subjects were wives.) Military, music, and war survivor each make up 4 percent of the total in the 1980s. These findings are summarized in Table 10.

Table 10.--Occupation of Non-White/Non-African-American Biographical Subjects, by Decade

Year	Occupation	Number	Percentage
1960s	Politics	23	63.90
	Military	2	5.55
	Religion	2	5.55
	Art	2	5.55
	Writing	2	5.55
	Other	5	13.90
Total		36	100.00
1980s	Politics	19	35.19
	Writing	7	12.97
	Religion	7	12.97
	Wife*	3	5.55
	Military	2	3.70
	Music	2	3.70
	War Survivor	2	3.70
	Other	12	22.22
Total		54	100.00

*Here all three were wives

V. DISCUSSION

This study supports Robinson's findings about the characteristics of adult biographies reviewed and therefore likely to be selected by libraries. An individual biography is likely to be about a white male from the United States. Women are underrepresented as are racial and ethnic minorities in this country. Citizens of developing nations and non-Western countries are also unlikely biographical subjects. As Robinson points out:

> Not only does this lack create problems in providing role models for readers, it also does the majority population a disservice by denying it the opportunity to gain information and insight from reading biography that might remove stereotypes and illustrate the similarities of the human condition.[1]

The lack of variety in the occupations of the subjects also presents a distorted view of the contributions people are making to society. Many interesting people of color from developing countries are certainly involved in activities outside of politics, but the readers of biographies are not likely to find their stories in the library. Nor is the reader of biographies likely to find African-American biographies which represent the tremendous range of activities in which African-Americans earn their living and express their talents.

Statistics from the U.S. Bureau of the Census stand in sharp contrast to the findings of this study.[2] For example, females made up more than half the population of the United States in 1988, but only 26 percent of the biographies reviewed in Booklist that year were about women. Similarly, African-Americans comprised 12.3 percent of the total

U.S. population in 1988 but less than 6 percent of the reviewed biographies were about African-Americans.

Hispanics are perhaps the most underrepresented group in this study when one considers that this group has grown five times as fast as the rest of the U.S. population since 1980.[3] Their number has leaped 39 percent and is now 20.1 million, 8.2 percent of the U.S. total. Time reports that "at this rate, Hispanics could overtake blacks (30 million) as the largest U.S. minority by 2015."[4] This study, however, has shown that in the 1980s, Hispanic biographies accounted for only .09 percent of the total.

Robinson argues that "the failure of biographies to portray adequately the value and usefulness of women, foreigners, and people who are not white non-Hispanics seems likely to perpetuate sexism and racism in our society."[5] Elizabeth Martinez Smith, County Librarian of Orange County, California, describes institutional racism as being fueled by a reluctance to change what pervades organizations such as libraries:

> Specifically, one does not have to exercise a choice to perpetuate a racist act. The organizational rules and procedures have already prestructured the choices against people of color. An individual only has to conform to the operating norms and values of the organization and it will do the discriminating for him or her. . . There is no need for individual racism . . . Well-meaning individuals inadvertently perpetuate an unjust system. All they have to do is adhere to traditional standards.[6]

Engle and Futas make a similar claim regarding the presence of institutional sexism: "The institutions of our society help to prolong the existence of sexism; and the library, as the preservation agent of the culture, is no exception."[7]

What, then, can libraries do to change the structures and procedures that perpetuate sexism, racism, and ethnocentricity in the selection

of biographies for their patrons? Gail Schlachter suggested in an RQ editorial:

> Since reviews, intrinsically, function as one of the best sources of information in the selection process--more objective than publishers' announcements, more efficient than personal inspection of all candidate materials--it makes more sense to concentrate our efforts on improving the review process than to reduce our dependence on the reviewing tools . . .[8]

One way the review process could be improved would be to expand review coverage. According to the AAP/ALA study referred to in the Introduction, fewer than 10 percent of all books published in the United States each year are reviewed, and some reviews appear as long as two years after a title is published.[9] Robert Broadus comments: "Some books thought by editors to be important or newsworthy receive, from the librarian's standpoint, almost too many reviews . . . On the other hand, a very good book may get too little notice."[10]

Booklist includes only those books which are recommended for library purchase. The Booklist staff at the American Library Association selects books with the help of a group of librarians, many of whom are specialists in subject fields. The Booklist Selection Policy states that "reviewers recommend materials to be of interest to libraries representing a great variety of communities, readerships, and resources."[11] G. Edward Evans, author of Developing Library Collections, raises an important question regarding journals with a policy of only publishing reviews of books that are recommended: "The major limitation here is that you are never certain as to which books were sent for review but got a negative evaluation and which books were never sent for a review."[12] This same question was raised earlier by Rosemary Weber: "Is a journal's silence about a title actually a nonrecommendation, or is it just the overlooking of a title."[13]

In Booklist's defense, it should be noted that Booklist reviews more books annually than any other book reviewing publication. In 1988, it reviewed a total of 8,419 print materials.[14] Book title production that year, however, was 55,483.[15] Booklist cannot be expected to review a thousand books each week. Clearly, a selection process must take place. What concerns a number of observers of the publishing and library worlds is that titles from small or alternative presses are ignored by the traditional reviewing media. Virgil Blake argues: "If the public library is to provide access to the greatest diversity of opinion, even unpopular ideas, it must find some way to ensure that small press titles are better represented and brought to the attention of collection development librarians."[16] Marcia Collins of the University of Missouri calls those who rely on the very limited number of brief reviews in the major reviewing journals as the list of books to buy, "villains."[17] According to Collins, "this mass-quantity, supermarket approach to buying books works to eliminate the publications of small presses, local publishers, or anything else which is an effort to secure."[18]

Judith Serebnick, whose studies were mentioned earlier, observes that the hundreds of books published annually by large, conglomerate-owned publishers have a greater probability of "catching the attention of more review editors than do the handful of titles from most small publishers."[19] Brett Harvey of The Feminist Press suggests that economics inevitably plays a part in the selection process. Review journals, he argues, rely on their profits primarily from advertising revenues and large publishers "are not likely to spend their advertising dollars in places where their books are not reviewed with some regularity."[20]

No evidence was found that could support the claim that biographies

of women, minorities, and foreigners are more readily available and are published in greater numbers by small and alternative presses. A future study of this would be helpful. It would seem logical, though, that presses devoted to women's issues or African-American concerns would print and have for sale biographies which evidently are not forthcoming from the large publishing houses which continue to focus on white males.

If librarians are to implement the objectives of ALA's Minority Concerns Policy then librarians will have to actively promote the publication and purchase of biographies of racial and ethnic minorities. Librarians must be careful, however, not to be satisfied with filling some sort of racial quotas. The quality of the work is important, of course. So too is the representation of a variety of occupations. Librarians must find and buy those biographies which tell the stories of all kinds of people, of all colors, of all nations, of both sexes, pursuing many different vocations. If librarians are not able to find these biographies in the traditional reviewing media, then it is time to look elsewhere.

VI. NOTES

Chapter I. INTRODUCTION

1. Sybil E. Moses, comp. and ed., Addressing Ethnic and Cultural Diversity: A Report of the American Library Association, 1986-1989 (Chicago: American Library Association, 1990), 16.

2. Ibid., 1.

3. William C. Robinson, "Adult Biographies Reviewed by Library Journal in the 1960s and the 1980s," RQ 29 (Summer 1990): 545.

4. Sandra K. Paul and Carol A. Nemeyer, "Book Marketing and Selection: Selected Findings from the Current AAP/ALA Study," Publishers Weekly 207, no. 24 (16 June 1975): 42.

5. Fontayne Holmes, "Notes of a Book Review Junkie," Top of the News 35 (Winter 1979): 163.

6. Elizabeth Futas, ed., Library Acquisition Policies and Procedures (Phoenix: Oryx Press, 1984), xxix.

7. Charles H. Busha, "Book Selection in Public Libraries: An Evaluation of Four Commonly-Used Review Media," Southeastern Librarian 18, no. 2 (Summer 1968): 93.

8. Denise M. Wilms, "An Evaluation of Biography," Booklist 75 (15 September 1978): 218.

9. Bill Katz, "Who Is the Reviewer?" Collection Building 7 (Spring 1985): 33.

10. Barbara J. Duree, "Serving Your Needs: A Summary Report," Booklist 76 (15 June 1980): 1471.

11. Robinson considered using Booklist but chose Library Journal instead because it had a separate section for biography reviews thus making his data collection easier.

12. Robinson, 546.

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2. G. Edward Evans, Developing Library Collections (Littleton, CO: Libraries Unlimited, 1979); William A. Katz, Collection Development: The Selection of Materials for Libraries (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1980); Richard K. Gardner, Library Collections: Their Origin, Selection, and Development (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1981); Arthur Curly and Dorothy Broderick, Building Library Collections, 6th ed. (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1966).

3. Kenneth S. Tisdel, "Staff Reviewing in Library Book Selection," in Reviews in Library Book Selection, eds. Leroy C. Merritt, Martha Boaz, and Kenneth S. Tisdel (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1958): 171.

4. Judith Serebnick, "Book Reviews and the Selection of Potentially Controversial Books in Public Libraries," Library Quarterly 51, no. 4 (October 1981): 405.

5. Serebnick, 407.

6. Judith Serebnick, "An Analysis of Publishers of Books Reviewed in Key Library Journals," Library and Information Science Research 6, no. 3 (July-September 1984): 302.

7. Judith Serebnick and John Cullars, "An Analysis of Reviews and Library Holdings of Small Publishers' Books," Library Resources and Technical Services 28, no. 1 (January 1984): 12.

8. Virginia Witucke, "Trends in Juvenile Biography," Top of the News 37 (Winter 1981): 158.

9. Virginia Witucke, "Trends in Juvenile Biography: Five Years Later," Top of the News 42 (Fall 1985): 49.

10. Council on Interracial Books for Children, Guidelines for Selecting Bias-Free Textbooks and Storybooks (New York: Council on Interracial Books for Children, [1980]), 10.

11. Ibid., 17.

12. Aileen Pace Nilsen, "Three Decades of Sexism in School Science Materials," School Library Journal 34 (September 1987): 120.

13. June L. Engle and Elizabeth Futas, "Sexism in Adult Encyclopedias," RQ 23 (Fall 1983): 29.

14. Ibid., 31. 15. Ibid., 36.

Chapter III. METHODOLOGY

1. The most frequently used biographical references for this study were Webster's New Biographical Dictionary (Springfield, MA: Merriam Webster, 1983), and Biography Almanac (Detroit: Gale Research Co., 1981).

Chapter IV. FINDINGS

1. William C. Robinson, "Adult Biographies Reviewed by Library Journal in the 1960s and the 1980s," RQ 29 (Summer 1990): 547-48.

2. Ibid., 548. 3. Ibid.

4. Unlike Robinson's study, this occupational category does have an equivalent in the male biographies in this investigation. But only one instance was found--the brother of the Brontë sisters.

Chapter V. DISCUSSION

1. William C. Robinson, "Adult Biographies Reviewed by Library Journal in the 1960s and the 1980s," RQ 29 (Summer 1990): 551.

2. U.S. Bureau of the Census, Statistical Abstract of the United States, 110th ed. (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1990), 12.

3. "Hispanics on the Rise," Time, 23 October 1989, 43.

4. Ibid. 5. Robinson, 551.

6. Elizabeth Martinez Smith, "Racism: It Is Always There," Library Journal 113 (1 November 1988): 36.

7. June L. Engle and Elizabeth Futas, "Sexism in Adult Encyclopedias," RQ 23 (Fall 1983): 29.

8. Gail Schlachter, "Reviewing the Reviews," RQ 27 (Summer 1988): 469.

9. Sandra K. Paul and Carol A. Nemeyer, "Book Marketing and Selection: Selected Findings from the Current AAP/ALA Study," Publishers Weekly 207, no. 24 (16 June 1975): 43.

10. Robert N. Broadus, Selecting Materials for Libraries, 2d ed. (New York: H.W. Wilson, 1981), 119.

11. "Booklist Selection Policy," Booklist 85 (1 September 1988): 1.

12. G. Edward Evans, Developing Library Collections (Littleton, CO: Libraries Unlimited, 1979), 162-63.

13. Rosemary Weber, "The Reviewing of Children's and Young Adult Books in 1977," Top of the News 35 (Winter 1979): 137.

14. Bowker Annual: Library and Book Trade Almanac 1990-1991, 35th ed. (New York: R.R. Bowker, 1990), 502.

15. Ibid., 480.

16. Virgil L.P. Blake, "The Role of Reviews and Reviewing Media in the Selection Process: An Examination of the Research Record," Collection Management 11, no. 1-2 (1989): 10.

17. Marcia Collins, "Automatic Libraries: Conformity and Control in American Book Collections," Journal of Academic Librarianship 9 (May 1983): 89.

18. Ibid.

19. Judith Serebnick, "An Analysis of Publishers of Books Reviewed in Key Library Journals," Library and Information Science Research 6, no. 3 (July-September 1984): 292.

20. Brett Harvey, "The Librarian, the Review, and the Small Press," Top of the News 35 (Winter 1979): 171.

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